



October 17, 2003
Susan Sports
Public Information Officer
(678) 413-8657

MANDATORY ROAD TESTS AND APPOINTMENT UPDATE

Georgia teens are required to make a reservation with the Department of Motor Vehicle Safety (DMVS) to take the mandatory on-the-road test before obtaining their first driver's license. This procedure has turned what was once an all day event into a manageable experience totaling about 60 minutes. Parents and children are able to plan their schedules around school and work and not worry about the long waits that often resulted in being turned away.

However, getting the appointment is not so manageable. The Department's driver's license call center answered 212,762 telephone inquiries concerning reservations since January. During the month of September, a staff of 11 agents booked 18,390 appointments for road tests statewide. The current state fiscal downturn has affected the Department's ability to manage the high call volumes leaving customers unable to reach agents. Those that do get through are left to experience long hold times only to then be told that no space is available for more than a month.

"The public is still under the misconception that a reservation can be made on the same day it is needed, and that is not the case. The high demand for road tests coupled with the staffing shortage that we are experiencing in the field as well as in the Call Center have made it a greater challenge to meet the needs of Georgia's parents and teens while balancing limited resources," said Marty Horne, DMVS Interim Commissioner.

The number to make a reservation is (678) 413-8500, select option 3. A toll-free number is available, (866) 754-3687, provided you are calling from an area code outside of metro-Atlanta. Appointments may be scheduled 45 days in advance, and it pays to plan ahead. Many anxious parents, especially in metro-Atlanta, are forced to schedule testing for their child further North and South which affects the capacity at those counties that typically don't have a scheduling issue.

Prior to January 2003, 16-year-olds applying for their first driver's license were only required to tackle an obstacle course of orange cones usually in a secluded parking lot which took about fifteen minutes. Now applicants first go through a series of pre-test maneuvers in a confined area. After passing the pre-test, they then move out onto a pre-determined test route where they are evaluated on traffic and safety skills such as yielding the right of way, proper turn signaling, backing and parallel parking. The expanded test takes approximately 27 minutes -- almost doubling the time -- so fewer exams can be given per day at each facility. However, extensive testing gives the license examiner a more reasonable assessment of the driver's competency in real traffic situations.

In addition to the reservation backlog, requiring mandatory road tests has perpetuated a rising failure rate for first time applicants. Of the 39,261 tests given in 2002, there was a 15% failure rate. 33,415 teens passed and 5,846 failed. In 2003, after implementing the mandatory road tests for six months, there was a 20% failure rate. 33,927 teens passed and 8,487 failed. A total of 42,414 tests were given. This increase in failures adds to total demand because these individuals must be retested. The DMVS driver's testing facilities are open Tuesday – Saturday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and the reservations telephone lines are open Monday – Friday, 7:00 am to 4:00pm.

TO OBTAIN YOUR FIRST DRIVER'S LICENSE:

- A learner's license must be held for one year and one day from its issuance.
- Appointments for on-the-road tests are mandatory and should be made up to 45 days in advance.
- Reservation numbers are (678) 413-8500 select option 3 or toll-free (866) 754-3687 (if dialing from an area code outside the metro-Atlanta area).
- Applicants must have a social security number.
- Applicants must present the Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program (ADAP) certificate, learner's license, notarized Certificate of School Attendance dated within the last 30 days and \$10.00 cash.
- A parent or legal guardian must sign an affidavit at the time of examination that the applicant has had at least 40 hours of on-the-road driving training either privately or in conjunction with a driver's education class.
- The vehicle the driver is testing in must be properly insured and you must show proper proof of insurance.